

What You Should **Know** and What You **Can Do**.

Tip Sheet



The National Eye Health Education Program (NEHEP) of the National Eye Institute at the National Institutes of Health invites you to join us in educating the African American community about eye disease and the importance of comprehensive dilated eye exams in preventing vision loss and blindness. Because of the role of [Name of organization] in the community, we need your help. Please consider participating in Write the Vision, an easy-to-implement and time-friendly health education initiative designed specifically to prevent unnecessary vision loss and blindness in the African American community.

Here is how you can help people at higher risk for eye disease write the vision for a future focused on eye health and wellness.

What You Should Know

African Americans are at higher risk for the following eye diseases and conditions:

- Cataract: Clouding of the lens of the eye
- Diabetic retinopathy: Damage to the blood vessels in the retina

- Glaucoma: Damage to the optic nerve
- Low vision: Difficulty seeing, even with regular glasses, contact lenses, medicine, or surgery

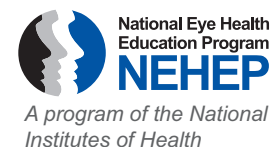
A comprehensive dilated eye exam, which is different from the exam given for glasses or contacts, helps prevent vision loss and blindness. During a comprehensive dilated eye exam, an eye care professional places drops in your eyes to dilate (or widen) the pupil to examine the back of your eyes to look for signs of disease and assess the overall health of the eyes. A comprehensive dilated eye exam is the only way to detect many eye diseases in their early stages.

Educating African Americans about eye health is critically important because:

- Half of all people with glaucoma don't know they have it.
- African Americans lose vision from glaucoma more often and at a younger age.
- More than 800,000 African Americans have diabetic retinopathy, and this number is expected to increase to more than a million by 2030.

Write
the **Vision**

Make your plan to protect your sight.



- Nearly 200,000 African Americans have low vision, and, by 2030, almost 400,000 are expected to have it.
- Many eye diseases have no symptoms, which makes early detection important.
- Vision that has been lost often cannot be restored.

What You Can Do

There is a lot you can do to help reduce unnecessary vision loss and blindness in the African American community. By participating in Write the Vision, you can help people understand their risk for eye disease and learn ways to protect their sight.

Write the Vision gives you the flexibility to choose the activity that works best for you. Each month, NEHEP will provide you with free resources to educate your community on diabetic eye disease, glaucoma, low vision, or healthy vision. These resources include social media posts; PowerPoint slides; short articles for your newsletter, bulletin, and website; and other NEHEP educational materials. Write the Vision can be easily incorporated into your existing health outreach efforts.

Your eyes are the windows to your soul as well as your health and can provide information about other conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure.

There is a lot that African Americans should know about protecting their sight. The good news is:

**There is a lot that WE can do.
So let's get started!**

For more information on these eye diseases and tips on protecting your vision, visit

www.nei.nih.gov/healthyeyes



Visit www.nei.nih.gov/nehep for more information.

